

Talking Points

Groundbreaking for Mississippi Film Center

Canton

Tuesday, May 23, 2006

Does Mississippi have what it takes to succeed in the film industry?

We know Mississippi has the technology, the professionals, the desire and even many of the collateral materials needed to make blockbuster movies here.

What's been missing – at least until this morning – has been a permanent presence for film-making business in our state ... a way to focus and sharpen our competitive edge.

Today, it's my privilege to announce the ceremonial groundbreaking for the Mississippi Film Centre right here on a 25-acre site of land in historic Canton, Mississippi.

This is the same Canton that has drawn worldwide attention as the setting for such movies as “A Time to Kill,” Willie Morris’ beloved “My Dog Skip” and “O Brother Where Art Thou?”

These productions – and others – have already contributed significantly to the economic impact in Canton and many other communities throughout Mississippi, generating millions of dollars, creating multiple job opportunities, strengthening our local crew base and educating the masses of Mississippians to this unique industry.

Like the tagline on “My Dog Skip” – “*Every family needs an optimist*” – I am optimistic that the movie-making business in Mississippi will continue to grow.

It will grow because Mississippi is movie-friendly in a way that really matters – the pocketbook.

Earlier in my administration, I signed legislation providing a 10 percent rebate to film-makers who choose Mississippi locations and buy products and services from in-state sources.

The movie “Walk The Line” about Johnny and June Carter Cash was the first to qualify for this tax rebate, as much of it was filmed in Mississippi.

It collected five Academy Award nominations. That’s a pretty good start.

The state is pleased to be a partner in development of this new facility as we seek to strengthen workforce training and educational opportunities related to the film production business. It’s part of my promise to create more and better jobs for Mississippians.

You know, movies have a cultural quality, too.

People use quotes from their favorite movies in their own lives and situations and, circulating through popular culture, movie quotes become part of the national lexicon.

Who can forget the line, “*If you build it, he will come*” from “Field of Dreams” in 1989.

And, “... *I think this is the beginning of a beautiful friendship*” from  
“Casablanca” in 1942.

We will build this one-of-a-kind economic development project to benefit  
the entire State of Mississippi.

It will provide workforce training for young people who want to develop job  
skills to work and have careers in the film industry.

It will generate additional economic impact through job creation as  
Mississippi heightens the industry's awareness of what we have to offer.

Today is the day we take this venture to a higher level ... the beginning of a  
beautiful new friendship with creative, innovative partners in the business of  
entertainment.

I think the script is good, the location is ideal, the players are prepared and  
the prospects are bright for a blockbuster relationship.

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